The Editing-Timeline of Age of Scorpius

[Insert Max Niedermayer:

> Since the topic of this discussion is “the publisher and his author”, I want to say something to our younger listeners and poets: Publishers are not welfare workers and they cannot be welfare workers. Just because someone wrote 6 poems, they can’t expect that a publisher, a state or a city will keep them fed for years to come. That is impossible. And if I may give the young writers some advice in that regard, I’d say:
> Arrive late.
> Arrive late to yourself,
> Arrive late to success,
> Arrive late to the banquets and academies.
> Don’t believe the whole world is listening, just because you wrote 6 or 12 poems. That is a statement you can find in many letters that I also get to see time and time again. They send in 2 poems and think you’re going to be blown away by their genius.
> That is not the case.]

On August 4th 2016 Milo created a new Wattpad Account. He already had another one for his Pokemon fanfics, but this one was specifically for his first original fiction called *The Zodiac Turner*. The account has since been deleted so I can’t give you any exact upload dates, but he probably finished the first draft between August [w] and November 2016 [NaNoWriMo]. Once it was uploaded, on January 14th, 2017, a friend of his started an official Instagram-account and 3 days later on January 17th he published The Zodiac Turner via amazon and even hosted a book-signing in March.

Milo is 14 years old and believes he wrote a book.

The reason why I’m mentioning this is not to make fun of Milo for having a wattpad account, in fact I wouldn’t even have been able to see any of this if I didn’t have an account on there myself. I’m mentioning this because one of the most frustrating parts of the entire saga is Milo’s chronic lack of patience. This entire graph [calendar] could have been prevented if he had released his scorpio book in autumn instead of spring and he hasn’t

stopped setting unrealistic deadlines since. Milo is just 23 years old, but I've known terminally ill people who weren't in as much of a rush as he is.

There's probably 2 main factors for why this keeps happening. One is that Milo seems to be allergic to doing any kind of research into his projects before he starts them. That's what happened when he tried raising 8000$ via kickstarter, failed, and then realised he actually needed around 10,000$ and it's probably what happened with Age of Scorpius. He didn't have any experience in publishing, and instead of doing research he set an unrealistic deadline and has been paying for it ever since.

But there is a second factor. Most people talking about this drama know that Milo wrote this book for 10 years and since it reads like a first draft it is easy to assume that he took 10 years for this singular draft. But it's actually worse. By the time of its release, the Age of Scorpius was in a quantum-state, simultaneously anywhere between its own first and ninth draft, the very first of which I already talked about. It was finished nine years ago and ever since then there was no point in time when Milo didn't believe that his book is ready for publication. The Age of Scorpius wasn't a singular catastrophe, but the culmination of a pattern of behaviour 10 years in the making, the half first of which is that he keeps confusing a book's worth of writing with an actual book and immediately tries publishing it. The second step is that, inevitably, he doesn't get the positive feedback that he wants, so he starts rewriting it.

The Zodiac Turner: The Five Trials went up on amazon in January 2017, the book was periodically up for free and he later also published one of his pokemon fanfics [wind-chimes] for free via amazon as well. He'd claim that he won the 2016 watty-awards with that one, but it was actually just the Pokemon-Watty-Awards.

Within the next 7 months, Milo would start rewriting his already published novel [nanowrimo 2017] and recruited beta-readers for it in March 2018. 5 months later he'd start emptying his wattpad-accounts and also unpublished *The Zodiac Turner* from amazon in order to transition into traditional publishing. After getting the beta-reader-feedback, he probably

started rewriting the book again by the end of 2018. On January 24th 2019 he sent out his first query to an agent. It didn't work. Milo is 16 years old and believes he wrote a book.

By August 2020 he has started rewriting the book again and finished his next draft around November. This time called "The Zodiac Turner: Age of Scorpius". He submitted that one to the Scholastic Art&Writing Awards and is a silver-Key-winner for the Greater Kansas City Writing Project 2021.

On January 11th, Milo uploaded his first TikTok. His strategy now was to build an online audience that could help him get an agent. This is where the story started for most of you, with Milo just out of high-school, pre-transition and still wearing braces. He is 18 years old and he believes he wrote a book.

Pause.

We are three rewrites in at this point, but that doesn't mean that *The Age of Scorpius* was in its fourth draft now. Yes, *The Zodiac Turner* got rewritten a bunch [folders] and Milo even wrote a first draft for a sequel called "The Phoenix Bracelet" [red ring-binder], but between 2017 and 2021 the book had changed a lot. Both TZT and AOS were zodiac-based fantasy novels with a scorpio protagonist with the power of zodiac turning, but The Age of Scorpius doesn't have 5 trials or a prophecy and Gemini aren't the villains anymore. Instead, the main conflict now revolves around a scorpio-code that didn't even get mentioned in The Zodiac Turner. What happened in 2020 was a complete overhaul of the entire series, so the book Milo tried advertising to TikTok here most likely really was the first draft of Age of Scorpius.

Of course, all of this was doomed to fail in the real publishing world.

After a year of posting and reaching around 110,000 TikTok-followers, Milo actually landed an agent by December 2021 [maybe 2021 clip]. He claimed that he'd be revising his book for 2-3 months now before it would get sent to publishers, but he was still stuck in revision a year later. By November 2024 he and his agent had separated. We will probably never find out what really happened because Milo keeps telling conflicting

versions about that story. Basically whenever Milo wants to look like a victim of the publishing industry he'll claim that his agent suddenly dropped their fantasy authors and when he wants to look like a passionate businessman he says that he left his agent in order to defend his creative vision. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle and much more banal than you'd think, but without the guidance of a professional there was no one left to hold him back, so Milo fell right back into his cycle and tried publishing a draft that wasn't anywhere near ready. First, he tried fundraising via kickstarter and when that failed he started self-publishing. We all know how well that went.

The first two chapters of the first edition are still up on patreon for free and they're riddled with word-choice-errors, repetition, disjointed dialogue, bad phrasing and stuff that doesn't fit into the worldbuilding. Most of all, the stream of consciousness and order of description have no regard for where the reader's attention should be now. Even if he may have had an outline for the plot-points, the prose as it is still has all the tells of a first draft where the author just writes everything down as they come up with them. Usually that gets fixed in later drafts, but that obviously didn't happen here.

The book got ripped to shreds by reviewers and as always when he gets bad feedback he started rewriting again. [we're doing this again clip]

I really want to stress this because it kinda got lost in the discourse around this book: There's a lot of bad books in this world but it's not normal for an author to completely rewrite and rerelease their book like this. What's especially frustrating about this is that he knows that he keeps rewriting his book and he even knows that his previous drafts are bad, but he hasn't connected these 2 synapses yet in order to realize that he has a habit of publishing bad drafts. [enter first draft clip]

One other factor is that Milo has one character-trait that every writer kinda needs, but paradoxically turns him into a bad writer, and that is that Milo really loves writing. When he claims that he did his 10,000 hours, that he spends hours every night writing and even more daydreaming, I have no

reason not to believe him. I just wish he'd stop writing new stuff when he's just supposed to edit the old stuff. And I know that this happened because he admitted to having added a completely new chapter that he just wrote on the day that he sent his manuscript out to the developmental-editor! [clip]

Looks like we found a chapter that genuinely was published as a first draft. Whenever I tell my editor-friend new stuff about this drama she starts asking if this book was written with AI and I really feel bad whenever I have to tell her that it wasn't.

Milo also doesn't know how editing works.

Editing isn't just making the book better, you also gotta lock the book down. Sure, you'll start out cutting and adding chapters, shifting scenes around as you lay out the emotional throughline, but there comes a point in time when the focus shifts from what you're writing to how you're writing it and agonizing over characters turns into agonizing over punctuation. Milo never clocked that.

Instead of limiting his 2nd edition to typos, word-choice and awkward phrasing – which would have been more than enough work on its own – Milo laid out his process as a complete chapter by chapter rewrite and the new version of chapter 1 has a completely different plot from the previous one. It's also still just a second draft that should never have been made public in the first place and once he's through this draft there's still no guarantee that this is even still the outline that he'll want to go with. [cycle] He's doing it again!

Well – he already did it once more already, but we'll talk about *alterlife* after I wrote my exams.